Developing a Culture of Research Impact
Examples of Practices at Coimbra Group Universities

Dr Ann Ryan, Chair, Coimbra Group Research Support Officers Working Group
What is Research Impact?

Impact: demonstrable contribution that excellent research makes to society and the economy.

i.e., the direct and indirect influence of research or its effect on an individual, a community or society as a whole, including benefits to our economic, social, human and natural capital.
Hallmarks of Impactful Research

Knowledge exchange

Impact

Academic

Economic & Societal

User

Research Excellence
The Impact Journey - Pathways to Impact

- Making research make a difference

  - Consider impact throughout the research lifecycle
  - Integral to the research
  - Collaborative partnerships create more impact and value
  - Build SMART objectives into Pathway to Impact
Practices for Developing a Culture of Research Impact within our institutions
Aarhus University IMPACT Guide

- Analysis of Evaluation of Summary reports with AU participation
- Literature Studies
- Stakeholder interviews
- Map pathway by identifying:
  - Outputs
  - Actions
  - Stakeholders
  - Communication strategy
  - Impact
“We study genetics of evolutionary adaptations in immunity leading to animal disease resistance.”

“Our research can contribute to improvements in biomedicine and biotechnology and is transferable mainly into applied practice in agriculture, veterinary science and nature protection.”
Research Impact Toolkit, Research Impact Funds, Impact Officers
KU Leuven – Support Mechanisms

Funding category

University Research Funds (131 mio euro/y) - BOF
University Industrial Research Funds (12,6 mio euro/y) - IOF

ENGAGING WITH SOCIETY
Experts by experience

INNODIA project on type 1 diabetes (EU funding through IMI)

READ MORE  WATCH MORE

TELLING STORIES OF IMPACT:
HOW UNIVERSITY RESEARCH AND INNOVATION MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Listening to affected citizens

NEW-MINE EU Training Network on Enhanced Landfill Mining

READ MORE

IMPACT THROUGH DISSEMINATION
› New ways of reaching your peers
› Demonstrating impact

OUR SUPPORT

IMPACT ON SOCIETY, ECONOMY, POLICY
One of the university's missions is service to society. We work through research and education.

Furthermore, funding agencies are increasingly demanding impact in addition to impact on research. Applicants need to demonstrate the impact of their research on society, economy and/or policy. This requires a clear research design.
NUI Galway Institutional Review of Research Performance – 2016-2018

Objectives

- Enhance research performance
- Engage all academic staff in self-assessment
- Conduct peer-review and evaluation
- Develop culture of high quality research

Research Environment

- Quality ratings per School
- School-level action Plans
- University-level Action Plan
- Impact case studies – more focus required

Research Outputs

- Societal Impacts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Research outputs (50%)</th>
<th>Research environment (40%)</th>
<th>Societal impacts (10%)</th>
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<td>World-leading originality</td>
<td>World-leading quality</td>
<td>Outstanding reach and significance</td>
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<td>Internationally excellent</td>
<td>Internationally excellent</td>
<td>Very considerable impacts</td>
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<td>Recognised internationally</td>
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<td>Considerable impacts</td>
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<td>Recognised nationally</td>
<td>Recognised but modest impacts</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>Unclassified</td>
<td>Not conducive</td>
<td>Little or no reach</td>
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Trinity College Dublin Research Impact Strategy

• ‘Research for Impact’ embedded in strategy
• Advancing Multi-disciplinary Initiatives one of 7 key enabling initiatives in draft Research Charter
• Inter-disciplinary research a priority
• 19 College thematic focused Inter-disciplinary research clusters
• 7 College Research Institutes

• Strategic Support Fund for linking Humanities and Medicine/Neuroscience
• INTREPID COST Action – to achieve more effective Inter-disciplinary research
• SHAPE-ID Project – to achieve best value from inter-disciplinary activities
• Training in entrepreneurship
• Engage politicians
• The Good City – collaborative project with municipality
• Centre for Integrated Research on Culture and Society

• Collaboration is integrated in research and education
• Encouraging interplay between academia, business and society
• Offering continuing professional development
• Facilitating contacts between students and business
• Stimulating contacts between researchers and business
• Forging contacts with alumni
Common Practices/Mechanisms Across Institutions

- Inter-disciplinary initiatives
- Training
- Workshops
- Communication
- Toolkits
- Impact guidelines
- Impact Officers
- Review
- Action Plans
- Research Institutes
- Seed funding
- Stakeholders

Developing Research Impact
Research Impact – how to maximise/develop a Culture?

- Difficult to operationalise in practice
- Very theoretical
- Non-linear – not from a single project
- Tendency to reduce impact to effects which are easier to grasp,
  e.g., short-term v’s long-term (beyond project)
  tangible v’s intangible
  intended v’s unintended
- Evidence of impact
  Monitor, evaluate and keep evidence
  measure intangible??

“I see journal articles, patents, legal fees and then... nothing.”
https://www.ifm.eng.cam.ac.uk/research/grant-writers-handbook/research-impact/
Realising the Potential of Research – Inter-disciplinarity key

- Flexibility at proposal stage
- Transdisciplinary approach
- Interdisciplinary Research Institutes
- Co-production/Co-creating/Co-writing
- Open Access
- SSH integration

Challenges of Inter-disciplinary research
- Definition?
- Peer-review?
- Evaluate?
- Discipline boundaries
A way of assessing the level of societal adaptation readiness of, for instance, a particular social project, a technology, a product, a process, an intervention or an innovation (whether social or technical)
Our Role in Enabling Challenge-led/Mission-oriented/Impactful Research

- Integrate existing mechanisms to underpin the Culture
- Facilitate Non-academic partnerships
- Facilitate trans-disciplinary collaborations
- More accessible language
- Embed research support across lifecycle of project
- Research Impact Officers/Case Studies
- Seed funding
- Horizon scanning – research landscape
- Horizon scanning – policy landscape

→ Facilitate a seed change in thinking
Delivering: Developing a Culture of Research Impact within our institutions